A humanitarian catastrophe—a tide of refugees fleeing Syria—is now entering its sixth year and the international community is still struggling to respond. The resources of the governments hosting the refugees, aid agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and a multitude of other actors are being tested. In the absence of viable political solutions to the conflict, governments in the region and the broader international community are all struggling to respond to the humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). No final solution to the war in Syria appears in sight and funds to support an ever-increasing population of displaced persons are neither sufficient now nor likely to be sustainable in the future.

The Syrian situation is occurring against the background of a global crisis of displacement. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2014 almost 60 million people have been forced from their homes by conflict, violence, and persecution. Furthermore, a large proportion of these people have been uprooted for a very
long time. Finding solutions for long-term displacement has long been on the global humanitarian agenda, but the international community is failing in this task, especially in terms of resettling refugees and providing adequate funding for humanitarian assistance.

All trends point to Syria becoming yet another long-term, intractable displacement crisis with profound implications for Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, the major host countries for Syrian refugees, as well as the EU and the broader international community. Can something be done about it?

In any attempt to address this question it is important to recognize the implications of the Syrian displacement on the current international order. The Syrian conflict and resulting displacement are clear signs that the present international system for preventing and resolving conflicts has been deeply challenged—at least in the Middle East. The Syrian displacement is also a clear indictment of the limitations of the United Nations as well as regional bodies to prevent and resolve such crises. Ultimately, the solution to the Syrian IDP and refugee crisis is political and demands an end to the violence and destruction in Syria. Only during the course of the last months of 2015, as the conflict in Syria began to affect the international security and stability of Europe, have any high-level efforts been launched to address the root cause of displacement. Meanwhile, the challenge of extending humanitarian assistance and protection to displaced Syrians continues to call for burden sharing and international solidarity.

It is no secret that an interrelationship exists between political and diplomatic solutions to the Syrian conflict and remedies to the displacement crisis. It is critical that as efforts geared to solve the Syrian conflict gather momentum,
the international community consider the effects of such solutions on resolving displacement. First, any political resolution needs to incorporate terms and provide sufficient funds for both physical reconstruction of the country itself and support Syrians who wish to voluntarily move back to their communities. This is likely to take years. Second, any remedy to the Syrian conflict will need to be accompanied and sustained by processes of reconciliation if returns of refugees and internally displaced persons are to be sustainable.

In the meantime, addressing the current displacement crisis should be based on recognition of at least two important realities. First, refugees themselves are actors capable of taking their own destiny into their hands—as demonstrated in their mass movement out of the region in the past year. While refugees and IDPs are usually depicted in Western media only as victims of conflict, they are survivors.

Second, it is important to bear in mind that the burden of protecting and assisting refugees has largely fallen on the shoulders of major host countries—primarily Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The governments of these countries are providing a public good for the international community, and it is indeed disappointing that appeals by host governments and the UN system for more assistance received scant attention—until large numbers of Syrians began to arrive in Europe. Finally, as the European refugee crisis is making increasingly clear, it is in the best interest of the international community and Europe that a new formula be found for effective burden sharing with these host countries.

It is against such a background that in Consequences of Chaos we propose a New Global Approach for Syria. The development of this approach would bring together the governments of refugee-hosting countries, the UN and other
Preface

intergovernmental agencies, regional bodies, international nongovernmental organizations and local civil society actors, and donor governments to consider and adopt a new system of burden sharing. The focus would be centered around

- Reaffirming the principle that protection of refugees is an international responsibility;
- Supporting common legal and policy approaches to Syrian refugees in the region that includes access to livelihood opportunities;
- Reaffirming resettlement as a core component of refugee protection and assistance and retooling elements of resettlement policy to meet the needs of especially the most vulnerable of refugees;
- Providing a forum for creative thinking on solutions for internally displaced people;
- Establishing a new relationship between humanitarian and development actors;
- Engaging development actors such as the World Bank more effectively; and
- Laying the groundwork for longer-term reconstruction and recovery efforts in Syria.

The process of developing this New Global Approach for Syria could be worked out through a consultative process with stakeholders over a six-to-twelve-month period jointly led by the UN secretary general and the president of the World Bank and could culminate in a global meeting in March 2017. Then, the challenge would be for executive bodies to actually implement these policy recommendations. The New Global Approach for Syria, if successfully implemented, would offer a “win-win” outcome, foremost, for Syrian refugees and IDPs, but also for major host countries as well as the EU, not to mention the broader international
community. This new system combining relief and humanitarian assistance with a developmental approach may form the skeleton of a template for managing the broader global refugee crisis as well as help reform international humanitarian governance.